



**IDENTITY CRISIS:
PARTICIPATORY
SELF-RELIANCE
FOR
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT:**



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Introduction:

Our National Identity is constituted by various Sub National Identities that make up the Polity that is Pakistan. Identity is recognized as the complex make-up of various factors, such as; Dialect, Traditions; Customs; Literature; Dress; History and the Values of that particular Society.

Growing Internationalization and Cultural Invasion have challenged the values and Traditions of various Third World Nations, States and Sub Nationalities. Economic disparity plays a large part in the dominance of a particular Culture over Others. Neo Colonial Powers and a Sordid Colonial Past are responsible for Rank Exploitation and a Pervasive Inferiority Complex that stunts the growth of many Cultural Groups.

Unfortunately, after Pakistan achieved Independence, we failed to break free of the intellectual hold upon our minds, thus denying true freedom. Secondly, the creative spark of self-reliance that differentiates a developing and equitable society from a no-holds barred, free for all, has failed to ignite. This is due to deliberate Intent on the part of the Rich and Affluent Class in order to perpetuate their hold upon the Jugular Vein of the vast and Ever-Increasing Majority of the Exploited Masses.

A True Leader is one, whom after He/ She has Gone, People Say: "We Did It!" We have only experienced Midgets, masquerading as Giants who created Personal Myths of Glorious Leadership. Other Nations have harnessed the Stars while we have merely built up the Egos of a few in complete denial of our Liberating Religious Injunctions. In Fact, often times, Religion itself has been used to keep the Poor deprived and shackled to the Exploiter Class!

Among all the factors that make up an identity, the role played by the weakest, and historically most dominated sector of society, such as the females, is largely responsible for maintaining Cultural Integrity. Of these, the Home Worker, who puts her talents to the Grind Wheel of Industrious Output, along with the many responsibilities of Cleanliness of the Home; Cooking of Food; Washing of clothes and dishes; Upbringing of the Children and playing the role of hidden host to the various Male Guests that Grace her humble abode, a large role is played by the most talented in contributing, either actively or passively, to the Home Economy.

By this is meant, either saving of expenses, by spinning thread, weaving Cloth, Stitching Clothes or making items of everyday use; or actively producing marketable goods like handicrafts; carpets; rugs; bedclothes; garments, etc, for sale as well as teaching or working as labor in factories. I am restricting the narrative to the so called lower classes, to the exclusion of the affluent classes who work as a pastime, in executive positions.

The romance of the drudgery of repetitive work such as spinning or weaving has been immortalized by the Bards and Sufi Poets that recall a simpler and more homogeneous past. The plight of the Home Worker is often ignored by Society at large as well as Governments and Policy Makers. In fact, these women folk are often looked down upon. If circumstances such as broken homes; drug addicted or unemployed husbands and sons and sick or disabled men folk, force them to eke out a pittance, in order to keep the home fires lit and the children either educated; satisfactorily nourished or well looked after. The discrimination and harassment that they face either in the work place, or commuting to it, is often unbearable. Male chauvinist attitudes and exploitation of the weak are symptoms of a barbaric past that have no place in modern civilized societies.

Way Forward:

Keeping all of the above in mind, an acceptable “Way Out” has been devised to cater to all the requirements and deal with the prejudices that are encountered on the thorn strewn Path of economic survival. That too, in keeping with the dictates of Religion and the Norms of our particular societies.

It is recognized Internationally that the positive backbone of any Economy is the small Producer and not the Exploitative large Conglomerates and Big Business. The solid productivity, engendered by necessity, the hard work and perfection of hand produced goods, and the love and care that is part and parcel of the output of the small Producer is the mainstay of a positive economy.

Past Experience:

We are fortunate in the sense of having an Icon and Role Model among us, personified by the Late Lamented, Akhter Hameed Khan, who developed the Thana Training and Development Centers (TTDCs), known as the Comilla Approach in 1959, for Rural Development. It earned him the Ramon Magsaysay Award from the Philippines and an Honorary Doctorate of Law from Michigan State University. The model actually fell prey to ineffective internal and external controls, stagnation, and diversion of funds. This prompted subsequent scholars and practitioners in microfinance, such as Muhammad Yunus of Grameen Bank and Fazle Hasan Abed of BRAC, to abandon the Cooperative Approach in favor of more Centralized Control and Service Delivery Structures. The new Strategy targeted the poorest villagers, while excluding the 'less poor'.

Akhter Hameed Khan subsequently went on to develop The Orangi Poverty Alleviation Pilot Project (OPP), a Bottom-Up Urban Community Development Initiative in Orangi. Within a Decade of the Initiative, Local Residents had established Schools, Health Clinics, Women's Work Centers, Cooperative Stores and a Credit Organization to Finance Enterprise Projects. By 1993, OPP had managed to provide Low-Cost Sewers to more than 72,000 houses. The Project subsequently diversified into a number of Programs, including a People's Financed and Managed Low-Cost Sanitation Program; a Housing Program; a Basic Health and Family Planning Program; a Program of Supervised Credit for Small Family Enterprise Units; an Education Program; and a Rural Development Program in the nearby Villages.

Comparing the OPP with the Comilla Project, Akhter Hameed Khan once commented:

“The Orangi Pilot Project was very different from the Comilla Academy. OPP was a private body, dependent for its small fixed budget on another NGO. The vast Resources and Support of the Government, Harvard Advisors, MSU, and Ford Foundation was Missing. OPP possessed no Authority, no Sanctions. It may Observe and Investigate but it could only Advise, not Enforce.”

The successful OPP Model became an Inspiration for other Municipalities around Pakistan. In 1999, Khan helped to Create the Lodhran Pilot Project (LPP) to collaborate with the Lodhran Municipal Committee. Learning from past experiences, the Project extended it's Scope to the whole Town instead of concentrating on Low-Income Settlements only. The Municipal Partnership was itself a new Initiative that ensured wider Civic Co-operation.

Secondly, The Sialkot/ Faisalabad/ Gujranwala Models are excellent Models for Home Grown Development through Independent Producers that contribute parts to Large Manufacturing/ Assembly Industries. Though much improvement and Government Support is required in order to facilitate the small Producers and create better Work Conditions.

Social Environment:

Any plan of action, aimed at achieving any end, has primarily to take into account the people who will design; implement; participate and directly, or indirectly, benefit from that plan. The local social framework has to be given Prime Importance! Successful implementation will depend upon harmonious integration with existing social set-ups. In most cases, these are exploitative and hostile. Without creating a threat to the existing power structure, efforts have to be made to undermine them where they are unjust. Therefore, it is obvious, that a thorough understanding of the set-up is a priority. Generally speaking the lower most, or subsistence class, is almost entirely dependent upon the landlord; moneylender/ trader ("Aarthi"); the bureaucracy; officialdom and the police. This degree of dependence has to be broken and a level of self reliance achieved before financial independence can be sought. The very complete degree of dependence excludes possibilities of unity. Being bereft of bargaining power, the poor are at the mercy of who ever possesses wealth. The Threat of immediate Survival that hangs over the head of the Bewildered and Exploited poor and dispossessed, has to be removed before they can be emancipated. This is provided as Skills Enhancement and Independent Small Production Facility within the confines of their homes. This contributes towards creating a buffer between dependence and independence.

Secondly, steps are called to be taken to begin to unite the target group, or part of it, in order to set a positive spiral of activities in motion. Together, the stages should be aimed at developing a movement towards creating a self-reliant base for the target group. The stages should allow, and nurture, a process that permits it to de-link from economic and psychological dependence, thereby building on its own creativity and self-reliance. Projects must evolve in this carefully staged manner and subsequent stages must be built on the collective experience of the previous stage. Thus a ready-made package, that anticipates all the stages, and proceeds according to a preconceived Technical Plan, designed from the "Top," without involvement and understanding of the Target Group, is impossible! Once this participatory, self-reliant base has been built, expert technical and financial assistance of one kind or the other can be better absorbed. Most significantly, A committed individual is required, who can identify with the poor; mobilize them; raise their consciousness and help them to organize themselves for Participatory, Self-Reliant, Sustainable Development. This individual would act as a catalyst or initiator, in order to break the viscous cycle of poverty begetting further poverty. This method is described as a new style, integrated Sustainable Development approach that makes use of the conventional, micro-level methodology for Project development and is based upon cost-benefit analysis, or minor variations of the same underlying principles.

Clustering:

Another Factor needs to be taken into account, in order to lay the Groundwork, that builds upon Past successes and present situations to achieve a breakthrough in Poverty Alleviation and Exponential Growth in Exports, to Support The National Economy, and contribute to Debt Servicing/ Balance of Payments between Imports and Exports. At present a 90:10 Ratio, tilted in favor of Imports, is making our Economy unsustainable.

"As the growing complexity of Technologies, Inputs, Products and Services seem to reward continuous Exchange and Learning Models, Cluster Initiatives are increasingly recognized as a Key Instrument for Promoting Industrial Development, Innovation and Growth. At the same time, in order

for the Potential benefits of Mutual Effort and Efficiency gains to Prevail, the Pressures and Inspiration Generated by Competition are Indispensable. The Focus of Cluster Actions are Geared towards the efforts of Firms, but the Development of Clusters is influenced by Various Groups of Actors, including Governments on National and Regional Levels, Academia, Financial Sectors and International Organizations.

Outcomes of Clustering tend to be Different, Depending on whether Public or Private Actors are in Charge. Studies of Cluster Processes have Concluded that Strict Top-Down Policies often Fail. As Cluster Initiatives are foremost a way of Supporting Micro and SMEs, it is vital that Firms are at the Center of the Cluster Processes." says Jens Sorvik, co-author of the Cluster Policies Whitebook, the International Organization for Knowledge Economy and Enterprise Development (IKED), in a dgExpertPerspective.

‘Conglomoculture’:

A New Approach, called ‘Conglomoculture’ has been conceptualized and is being tried out on-ground. This consists of a Network of Trained Home Workers, who are free to work for themselves, as well as remain available for Piece Work Orders for a Mother Enterprise, in order to meet expected Future Orders. In this manner a Growing Pool of Skilled Workers is available for Meeting large Orders (Including Exports).

These Networks of Home Based Female Entrepreneurs are provided with Materials on Cost plus Transportation Basis as a One Window Operation, to save them from having to traverse the Markets in search of Quality Materials.

It is proposed that SMEDA (Small & Medium Enterprises Development Authority), should provide Small Grants to Qualified but Disadvantaged Workers in order to equip them with Small Industrial Grade Machines and Allied Equipment, suited to their Enterprise Network (For Example, Sewing Machines for Garments and Accessories; Other Machinery for different Industries) as well as Small Working Capital (Estimated at Rs. 1,00,000.00 per Worker).

The BOI (Board of Investment) should enable Networks to setup Retail Outlets for Manufactured Products, that would eventually become Export Houses, wherein Specialized Products of Small Individual and Networked Manufactures can provide their Products on Item plus Costs of Selling/ Exporting and reasonable Profit Margin is provided to the Outlet/ Export House and Major Profit Margin is provided to the Original Manufacturer. This is done to avoid the Huge Profit Margins extracted at Credit Basis that Middlemen are currently exploiting Poor Producers. This amounts to the perpetuation of Sweat Shops and Rank Exploitation that is debilitating the Economy at present.

The Nucleus:

The Management System or "Intezami Nizam", has evolved into an Alternate Economy Management System. Its focus is primarily upon the deprived masses that constitute the vast majority of our Population. Among them, a further distinction firstly targets the Female Population. This Target Group, is forced, by economic circumstances and repressive male chauvinists to live in miserable slum conditions, face malnutrition; growth stunting and eking out a subsistence living. In order to jump-start the Economy, an Alternate System has been painstakingly evolved and tried out on ground. This Social Experiment has produced amazing results! Uneducated and semi educated females have been adorned

with Skills that enable them to make a visible impact upon their surroundings. Secondly, a better quality life for all can be assured by using this approach. In order to enable the Management System to evolve into a dynamic reality, it is first of all necessary to fully comprehend its scope and dimensions. Simply put, the System is an alternate view, with emphasis upon nurturing scarce resources and using them in the most efficient manner! The System takes into account and makes use of Low and High Tech products and equipment. Most importantly, the aim is to use the least expensive alternates that also provide the most impact in the shortest possible time. This is not to say that quality is allowed to suffer! Indeed the long term view is given priority and short-term gains, though catered for, are given less importance than achieving long term goals. The System seeks to balance the whole rather than take a fragmentary look at the problems. The patterns of interconnections and inter-related feedback among sub-systems are integrated to form a complete web of badly needed support. This safety net, once put into place, will provide the take-off point for highly charged positive development and dynamic change.

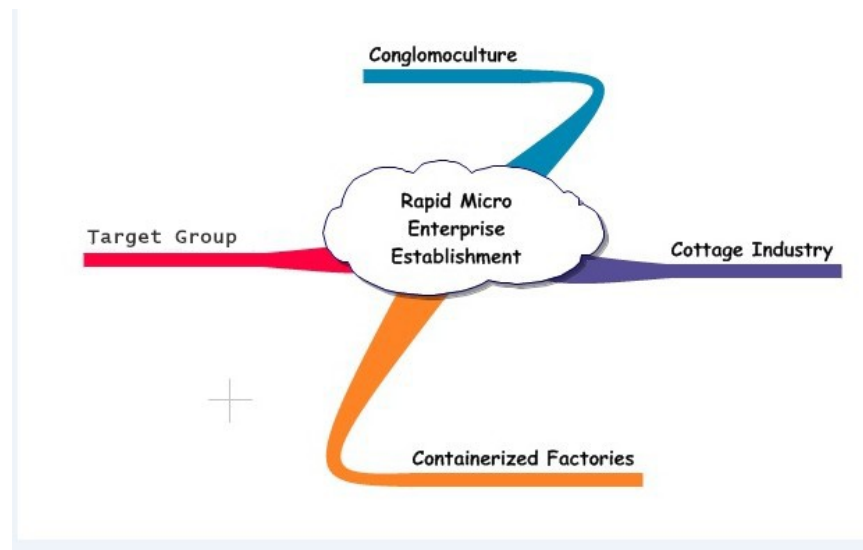
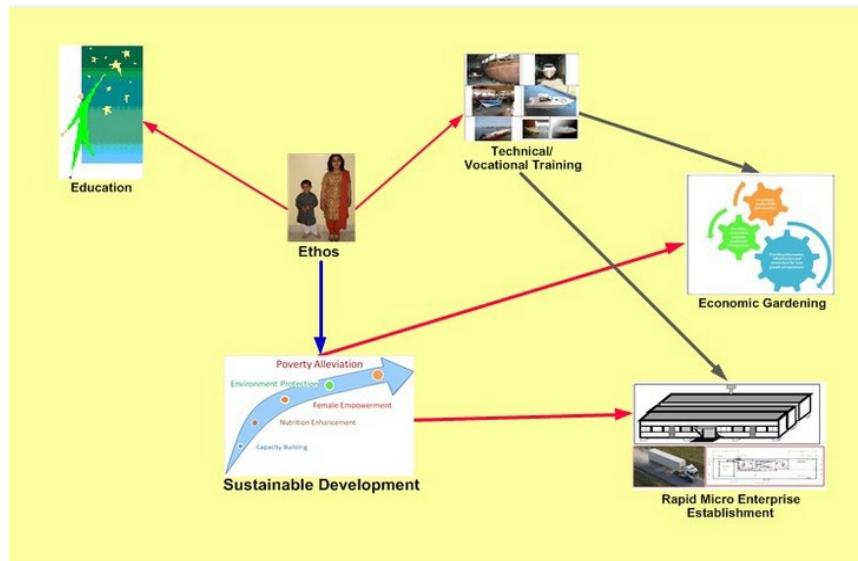
The Markaz or Service Center is introduced into an otherwise economically depressed area. This Markaz or Center is the nucleus and facility for Agents for Change. The necessary Technical Skills and Development Tools are firstly received in these Centers and subsequently disseminated to the surrounding area. In short a Viable and Working Solution is first put in Place and then used to train the deserving inhabitants of the area. With skilled workers, more technical and value added goods and services could be provided. The emphasis is upon nurturing skills, resources, and employing them for Basic Economy Generation. There is no point in over elaborating this vital aspect that is The Missing Link in the Chain of Progress, We have to enable the small female home-based worker to generate economy. This Micro Management is just as important as the Macro Balancing Act that is being undertaken by Pakistan's Economy. When each single building block of society is secure in its existence, when we are, one and all, emancipated from subjugation to an exploitative and restrictive economy, the so called Free Enterprise, which is in practical terms is a Free for All Economy, ruled by Mafias, Pirates and Czars! When we enter into an Egalitarian, Just and Equitable System that Creates and Thrives rather than Parasitically lives off the Blood, Sweat and Tears of a lower class! Only then, we complete the fragmented cycle of ecologically balanced, self-rejuvenating and self-sustaining Service Oriented Economy.

Our system of social interdependence has fallen prey to the ruthlessness of materialism and existentialism. The vital safety net needs to be replaced. Fragile human relationships have fallen before the imperatives of need. The system of sharing and caring has gone. It has to be replaced and that too on an emergency basis. The complete integrated whole that is depicted serves as an Economically viable and functioning system that also provides its services as a Poly-Tech Institute. This provides the deprived individuals with the skills necessary to maintain themselves and to be of use to society as a whole. Thus the Center aims to enhance human potential through a process of demonstration, exposure and hands on training that is pertinent to her situation, in a manner that is consistent with good Management. Thus Human and Resource Management are catered to at one and the same time.

Pre-Packaged Industry:

Once Skills are attained, there is a need to put them into practical use. It is absolutely useless to provide people with Skills and not Enable them to deploy these Skills in order to increase incomes. Or

to force them to undertake low-paid and exploitive occupations working for the Capitalists.





Nutritional Powder Baby Food Full Process Line

Conclusion:

When the Population reaches critical mass and living conditions reach deprivation on a large enough scale, something is bound to give!

A suggested adequate response to 21st Century CE challenges and opportunities that face our Nation has been presented. It is targeted to make a beginning to overcome the following:

- Hunger & Malnutrition.
- Extreme Poverty.
- Converting Adversity to Opportunity

Problems are structural; good people, even with adequate resources, are unable to produce favorable outcomes while working within such an environment, what to talk about the vast majority who have no resources what so ever!

Let us Create vibrant, dynamic and locally self-sufficient communities.

We must Release and Tap the Enormous Potential of the people who can develop their own skills and local resources. Do not Hijack and Cap it as has done in the past!

A Dynamic process of Practical Education and Safe, Home-Based Cottage Level Production is definitely workable as proved on ground with various individuals at many locations in Abbottabad. However, it needs to be taken to it's logical Conclusion with the Active Support of Local Government.